

ACROSS THE SEA

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

THOMAS S. CHARD.

Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them,
and behold the City shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with
gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads,
palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

* * * And after that they shut up the gates; which,
when I had seen, I wished myself among them.

— *Pilgrim's Progress*.

CHICAGO:
JANSEN, McCLURG & COMPANY.

1875.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874, by
JANSEN, McCLURG & CO.,
In the office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.





P R E F A C E .

THE poem whose name gives title to this little volume, was published in outline in the winter of 1869, and now appears for the first time as completed. *The sea*, as a picture of life, has been celebrated by the poetic thought of all ages, and the author will therefore hardly hope to offer much that is new in the following verses. His only excuse for so worn a theme is, that the world still loves the picture, and that each generation can, at best, but reset the old jewels of the past.







CONTENTS.

ACROSS THE SEA, - - - - -	9
THE SEVEN SLEEPERS, - - - - -	33
A LEGEND OF ST. JOHN, - - - - -	45
THE BLESSED VALE, - - - - -	53





ACROSS THE SEA.

INSCRIBED TO

DAVID SWING.





ACROSS THE SEA.

I.—CHILDHOOD.

Ah! who can speak that country whence I fled?
None but a lover may its beauty know,
None but a poet can its rapture sing;
And e'en his muse, upborne on Fancy's wing,
Will grieve o'er beauties still unnoticèd,
O'er raptures language is too poor to show.

Fore'er remains the land where children dwell,
Earth's fairest mem'ry, and its Palestine;
Tho' years have passed since on my forehead there
Were graven lines of weariness and care,
Still on the silver string of memory oft I tell
The golden beads of joys that once were mine.

Dear distant Land of Childhood ! God doth know
That I have longed to dwell in thee again,
As when by care unvexed, by doubt undriven,
With eyes as blue, and heart as pure, as Heaven.
Sweet are the days of childhood, glad the flow
Of unhurt joyous life in every vein.

It may not be, those sunny hours are flown,
And loud "The Future" knocks at every gate;
Still move we on the path where none returns,
Where wait afar, or near, our funeral urns,
That mystic path, whose ways are all unknown,
For only life's surprises make us great.

Yet still I dream, as o'er the swelling deep,
I gaze upon the far enchanted shore,
Through whose retreats the memory-brooding sea
Rolls in deep monotone continually
Waves of soft melody, which fall asleep
In rosy glens that I may see no more.

O holy music of the flowing sea,
Heard never but at eve, when shifts and gleams
On waves afar the light of joy still ours,
Because remembered still, thy voice o'erpowers
My soul with pensiveness, sweet reverie
And memory of half-forgotten dreams.

'Twas early, Sea of Life, I loved thee well,
And mused betimes upon thy strand, till rolled
Ashore from Daylight's wreck her gilded spars,
And Night, in thee, a chandelier of stars
Had hung, to light the grots where mermen dwell,
The deep-sea grots of amethyst and gold.

Beyond thee, when thou wert of gentle mood,
And held with all the weary winds a truce,
Upon the other shore I could descry
Where, faintly outlined in the western sky,
A mystic rainbow-girdled Headland stood,
Whose silver sandals thou dost rise to loose.

Far on the verge, where sky and waters meet,
The Headland's hazy outline I could trace;
High in the blue of Heaven its summit lay;
There sleeps the twilight, till the crystal Day,
Waked by the song of birds from slumber sweet,
Beams on the Headland fair with lovelit face.

For I have ne'er believed the Headland's brow
Is bathed forever in the noon-day glare;
Dearer to me the quiet hour of eve,
And when at last this passion world I leave,
May I, sometimes, behold the stars, as now,—
In the sweet gloaming — tho' "no night is there."

One early morn, ere earth had waked from sleep,
From the calm shadow of my tent I stole;
I could not rest, and as I sought the shore,
To tell my longings to the ocean o'er,
A warning Voice, uprising from the deep,
Murmured in plaintive rhythm to my soul.

THE VOICE.

Why wouldst thou go? the way is long and drear;
Thou mayst be happy where thou art, but stern
The fortune is that rules the watery waste.
He who doth wisdom love will not make haste
To change a peaceful way for one of fear,
And he who leaves this shore can ne'er return.

The warrior waves that lie in peace asleep
Upon the stilly bosom of the main,
Will don their plumes of snow when night is by,
And rise in battle 'gainst the stormy sky;
Where wilt thou hide thee from the angry deep,
Till it has sunk to silvery dreams again

THE ANSWER.

I may escape, for others have before,
Why should I fear to view the storm-cloud's form?
I answered to the Voice. In One I trust,

Upon whose blazing path the clouds are dust,
Why should I cower 'neath the whirlwind's roar?
God's chariot is the whirlwind and the storm.

The thunder of the deep will be my psalm,
And e'en the crested wave, that totters o'er
My way, will seem an emerald arbor fair,
With portals of bluebells and lilies rare;
For Fancy knoweth not of storm or calm,
It dreameth but of beauty evermore.

THE VOICE.

Yet 'tis a weary way, the Voice replied,
A trackless way of danger and of care;
And from thy cheek, ere thou the Headland find,
The rose will yield its petals to the wind;
And from thy heart an adverse cruel tide
Will steal the dream of hope, and leave — despair.

Consider too, O youth, Earth is a sphere,
And he who journeys to the verge of age,
But comes at eve to where he left at morn,
But views at last the hearth where he was born,
But learns, the bright horizon ne'er draws near
The circle climbers of life's pilgrimage.

Think well, again, thou mayst forever part
From pleasure, seeking pleasure o'er the main.
The good of life — such is the human lot —
Seems only good to those who have it not.
Joy, smiling, opes the portals of the heart,
But when he enters, Lo! his name is Pain.

Nothing but rest can satisfy thy thirst
For happiness. Hast thou on land or sea
Found what was not a weariness at last,
And shall to-morrow cheat thee as the past?
The glowing bubbles of the future burst,
Touched by the finger-tip of Memory.

Thou art a poet, yet perchance may find
The birds will carol more delicious lays;
Thy waves of song may melt in melody,
Yet softer is the music of the sea.
Thou canst not rhyme so sweetly as the wind,
And nature is too subtle for thy phrase.

But leaning on the muffled harp of thought,
Here sweet for thee will sigh the summer wind,
And dreamful will the rhythm of the deep
Upon the shore of silver fall asleep.
Nor wilt thou miss what thou hast never sought,
Nor seek what men at last have failed to find.

Yet if thou wilt not heed our counsel sage,
If still thou dost our warning cry despise,
Yon barge will bear thee from these happy shores.
Behold its silken sail, its crew, the oars,
And thou its prow, thro' calm and tempest rage,
Mayst guide in peace at last — if thou art wise.

Thus speaks the Voice to every child, but yet
Youth evermore to Hope will loyal be.
Impatiently I listened to the strain,
Then turned me to the Headland once again,
Which in the early morning light was set
An emerald in a golden ring of sea.

II. — YOUTH.

The slow long wave crept up the ocean marge,
To steal the silver sparkle of the sand ;
Then lapsing from the shore, I scarce could feel
Its soft pulsations underneath the keel,
As I sat patiently within the barge,
Until the breeze should bear me from the land.

And as I waited, lo ! the morning sun
Rose golden on the misty eastern sky,
And through the rosy dells the sunbeams bright
Stole from the flowers the jewels of the night ;
But yet no seaward zephyr had begun
To fill the canvas drooping listlessly.

I saw an aged man upon the shore,
There was a kindly smile upon his face
As thus he spake to me — “ Here have I dwelt
For centuries, yet I have never felt
The winds of heaven upon my forehead, nor
Will they e’er visit this spell-haunted place.

Your gaily-painted barge will wait in vain
For favoring winds to fill its silken sail.
If you would ever leave these drowsy shores
Your crew must sweep the waters with their oars.
To win the Blessed Headland o’er the main,
But tireless strength and effort will avail.”

I gazed adown the barge ; the silent men
Toyed with their oars, awaiting my command ;
The first was “ Courage ” — quick to see and dare,
And next came “ Patience,” he as ready e’er
To calm an angry brow to peace, and then
Came “ Justice ” — “ Knowledge ” sat at his right hand.

I held the rudder. No hand but mine own
Could guide the mystic barge across the sea.
But in the bow stood "Faith," whose vision keen
Discerns what mortal eye hath never seen,
And when a mist across the deep is blown,
Sendeth sweet messages of hope to me.

Why tarry ye, O men? the way is long
To yonder hazy Headland's wave-worn base.
We wait in vain for favoring winds to blow,
'Tis yours to pull the oars. Row, bravely, row,
Keep even stroke, ye merry hearts, with song,
And lead the swift sea-birds a winning race.

The willing oarsmen heard the words, and bent
Them to the toil; but "Knowledge" had not heard,
And still he dreamed upon his trailing oar,
Until the barge had rounded to the shore
We scarce had left. In vain the labor spent.
The old man smiled again. The swift sea-bird

Such rivalry would never fear, said he,
"Knowledge" must pull with "Courage"; "Justice," too,
Must draw his stroke with "Patience," else your barge,
Despite your strength, will never leave the marge,
But still in weary revolutions be
A vanity of vanities to you.

These words to you in parting. O beware
In seeking heaven, lest you despise the earth;
Heaven is both what we are and where we go,
And we are heaven-builders here below;
Alike we take it and we find it there,
And heaven is worth to us what we are worth.

God hath the earth to heaven in marriage given,
See how the ocean yieldeth tenderly
The penciled shadow of the morning bars
Whereon, like notes of music, rest the stars.
Ah! listen, for the azure dome of heaven
Is echoing now the music of the sea.

Love wisely then the earth, and you shall love
The Holy City where the angels dwell.
The gentle light of love will never bring
The circling moth upon his dusty wing.
No thief will steal, no rust corrode above,
Nor in your heart — if love be there. Farewell.

III. — MANHOOD.

So to their oars my boatmen, cheerily,
Bent once again, and then, with steady stroke,
They drew upon the waters till the shore
Grew lower in the distance, and no more
Thro' the gray mist the mentor I could see,
But oft I thought upon the words he spoke.

And oft, O wise Experience, have I found
The lesson true you taught to me that day.
*No progress but by toil, and there must be
In heart and mind a vital unity.*
Our days are else in vain, and ne'er will bound
The "Barge of Time" upon the heavenly way.

But soon the ripple of an adverse tide,—
Whose darkling bitter waters seemed to stay
The prow,—twined like a sea-weed growth the oars;
A tide that hies forever from the shores
I sought, and with its soft caresses, wide
And far, bears hapless wanderers away.

Yet gallant are the boats that drift along;
Proud are the hearts that float where flows the tide.
The youth whose heated fancy sees afar
The promise of ambition's streaming star,
And he who follows with a careless song
Some godless passion he has deified.

The man of curling lip and brow of scorn,
The worshiper of reason and of self,
The atheist, wanton, and the giddy maid,
The faith-betrayer and the love-betrayed;
Self-righteous pharisees, who would adorn
Or hide with pious garb their love of pelf.

The poet with a poem on his lip,
The writer with an essay in his heart,
The statesman with a law within his brain,
The merchant princes busy with their gain;
Dreamers who reck not that their barges slip
Upon a tide from which so few may part.

Ah, tide that hurries to the Land of Fear,
The arms are feeble, and perplexed the will,
And the hearts childish that must stem thy flow,
And it is sweet to rest, and hard to row.
I, too, have drifted on thy waters drear,
And but for grace divine were drifting still.

Life's sea, at best, is but a lonely sea,
Yet thrice from angry winds and waters rude
The mem'ry of their bitter feud has flown
On the soft pinions of a gentle tone.
Thrice heavenly messengers have come to me
To break the bondage of my solitude.

And first, my mother's love, warm, tender, true,
To guide me o'er the billowy deep, was given ;
E'en now I view her barge's silvery trail,
And faint, in distance, mark her snowy sail
Bloom like a lily on the water blue.
'Tis but a mirage, she is long in heaven.

O how my heart has hungered for her smile,
When life has pressed me with a weight of cares,
Yet I have thought, wherever I have been,
Some gentle power was leading me from sin
To virtue's sweeter, nobler way the while.
It was the power, dear mother, of thy prayers.

One morning when, like Cana's Lord, the sun
Had changed the waiting water into wine,
Sped o'er the rosy tide a seraph bright,
Within a craft of pearl and crystal light,
And still she sped until our ways were one,
And I was hers, for aye, and she was mine.

Once, when my tears were falling on the wake
Which far and near my wayward path betrayed,
Shone there upon me in that fateful hour,
A Holy Being, clothed in light and power.
And with Him came th' eternal morning's break.
How sweet His words, 'Tis I, be not afraid.

Thus to the soul of man there come alone
Three sacred ones upon the Sea of Life;
All others are as distant sails that fly
Far from the ken, and so forever by:
And he is blest whose faithful heart hath known
And loved the name of Savior, Mother, Wife.

Thus o'er the Sea of Life my way I take,
Not waveless have its waters been to me,
For I have known, in many a fearful hour,
The weight and fury of the tempest's power;
But mercy e'er the sable clouds doth break
And set the prisoned light of heaven free.

And oft, O sea, thy troubled waters cease,
Save when they smile to hear the breeze at prayer;
Thy calm so deep that he who glideth by
May wonder which is sea and which is sky;
So full thou art of stars, so sweet thy peace,
We seem in heaven while on thy bosom fair.

IV.—AGE.

My boat is old, for I have journeyed far,
But still the Headland seems a weary way;
My boatmen, too, are old, and oft an oar
Slips from a feeble hand, but yet the shore,
Upon whose forehead beams the evening star,
Is nearer still and nearer every day.

What matters that my boatmen now are old,
Why should I grieve that with a feeble hand
I hold the swaying helm? The waves no more
Rise o'er the prow to keep me from the shore,
The silken sail at last the breezes hold,
The tide of Love sets toward the Heavenly Land.

O flowing tide that in our autumn time
Ebbs from the world, and bears us on thy breast,
I would to every human soul 'twere given
To drift upon thy silver sheen to heaven;
To fall asleep, and dream, and wake — SUBLIME,
Within the crystal harbor of The Blest.

Dear are thy urging waters, starry tide,
Forever gently flowing heavenward;
Thine every dimple is a token sweet
That rested there some beauteous angel's feet,
Thy sheen, a radiant carpet for the Bride,
Laid to the wedding Temple of her Lord.

Soon o'er the wave my boat no more will ride,
The music of the dipping oar will cease,
And through the glimmering golden mist will fall,
From the calm Headland's height, a loving call,
Come hither, child, forevermore abide.
Within thy Father's House — at Home — in Peace.

L'ENVOY.

Hark! there is music on the lovelit sea.
Music, sweet music falls upon mine ear,
Soft as the sigh of June, when die the hours
Crimsoned with sunset and the blush of flowers.
Dost thou not hear it? O it seems to me
No mother's cradle-song was e'er so dear.

The music ceases. From the eastern sky,
Lo! the umbrageous clouds, whose gloomy frown
Shadowed my youth, drift westward, dark no more,
They float illumined o'er the heavenly shore.
Behold, they part! and thro' their portals high
The gleams of endless glory shimmer down.

Farewell, O Deep, nor be thy solemn bell
Jarred as I go by grief's tumultuous blast.
Farewell, ye winds, for me ye ne'er again
Will fret the bosom of the restless main.
To thee, O Barge of Time, a long farewell,
Sweet voices call me. I am home at last.

Give ear, O Earth, the honeyed air again
Swells with the rapture of the heavenly shore;
And I am singing as I upward pass
Upon the "sea of mingled fire and glass,"
To Him who Loved and gave Himself for Men,
Be Glory, Honor, Power, Forevermore.





THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

INSCRIBED TO

ROBERT COLLYER.





THE SEVEN SLEEPERS.

WE seem within a pleasant vale to dwell,
Whose boundary knows the early summer's spell,
And where, in leafy tabernacle, June
Hears not the mandate of the waning moon.
The river bank and hill-side of the vale,
And orchard fruitage streaked with morning pale,
Grow rosy with the rosy summer hours.
Green is the dewy turf and gay with flowers.
The morning sky is azure ; we behold
The white clouds sleeping on the eastern hill,
At eve — a fleecy flock — they follow still
The shepherd sun upon his path of gold.
Sweet is the air, and peace is everywhere :

Save that in distant skies beyond our time
We mark the vivid shafts of lightning fly,
Shot from the twanging bow of thunder where
The sky is bright with pale auroral light,
Framed in by darkness; there we view
The stern death-struggling of armed hosts —
The smoke of burning cities — martyr fires —
Towers toppling to ruin, palaces,
Vast columned temples, and triumphal arch,
Fair hanging gardens, walls magnificent,
Resolved to dust by time — as summer's sun
Resolves again a fleecy cloud to mist.
Yet sometimes even here the spectral light
Broadens and brightens into sunny day,
And the soft winds (the sweeter for the war
Of elements,) blow thence to us Legends,—
Traditions fair of noble hearts as true,
Of honor pure, of love as sacred — deep —
Of valor great — of homes as fair and dear,
As fresher, better modern days have known.

I love the Legend of the Sleepers Seven,
Which comes from days so near the Manger — Cross,
It seems to me a tale of Holy Writ.

When Decius sate upon the Roman Throne,
And made his empire red with Christian blood,
Seven noble youths who dwelt at Ephesus
(Noble in birth and every Christian grace)
Refused to heed the Imperial will and bow
Themselves in worship to the pagan gods,
Preferring the reproach of Christ, to all
The wealth and honor of the Court of Rome;
And thus before the Royal Tyrant (who
It chanced was then at Ephesus) the youths
Bore witness to the faith more dear than life.
“The living God who made the earth and sky,
And dwells in Temples never made by hands,
Hath set within the Heaven of Heavens His Throne;
He holdeth in His hands a thousand spheres,
And hath created all that is create;

Jehovah infinite, eternal, good,
And wise, we humbly worship, serve, adore,
We cannot bow, O monarch, to thy gods."

Behind a smile the Emperor hid his rage,
And bade the youths consider well, and count
The gain or loss which might to them befall.
The Emperor's favor was a life of gain,
His anger roused was like a scorching fire.
And thus he sent them from his presence out,
To think upon his words, till he again,
And soon, should come in power to Ephesus.

So passed they from his presence, but the world
Loves not the men who are unloved of kings.
The silversmiths that made the idol shrines,
Raised, as of old, a tumult, and the youths
Fled secretly, and sought a refuge safe
Among the mountain heights near Ephesus;
And there within a hidden cave they dwelt,

While Malchus (one of them, but lately come
To Ephesus) brought food to them by night.

Ye deem their lives were sad? Oh they were blest,
On wings of prayer the hours went lightly by ;
And oft, when day was spent, toward eventide
Came One into their midst, who brake to them
Celestial bread for their deep hungering.
Till, lo ! again with martial pomp and pride,
The haughty Decius came to Ephesus,
And by the whisper of a faithless spy,
He learnt the guarded secret of the cave,
'Gainst which a massive wall the tyrant built,
And so the hiding-place became a tomb.

“They are not dead but sleeping,” for the Lord
Hath sent His angel who hath touched their eyes,
And sweetly as a child at evening, dreams
Upon his mother’s bosom, lulled to rest
By the soft pulsings of her gentle heart,

So rested well the brave Ephesian youths,—
Guarded by angels, while celestial light
Filled the lone cave and made its rocky bounds
Invisible; and thus they might have seen,
(But that their eyes were closed in heavenly sleep)
The bright stars drifting on the ethereal tide,—
The moon at quarter, like a golden boat
Rock onward to its changing destiny —
The great sun, rising from the under-world,
Blanch all the planets with his fiery rays.
Beneath them were the blue Ægean sea,
Miletus, and the proud Ephesus, where
Rose the world's miracle of marble white,
The Temple of the goddess worshiped there.
Day follows night and night the busy day;
The generations come and go apace,
The child hath left his toys, and in the whirl
Of years is now a grandsire by the hearth,
And now hath passed away and is forgot.
Two hundred years are fled, when, lo! one day

A mason finds the moss-grown wall of stone
Built by the cruel Decius, strong and high,
And knowing not it is a sepulchre,
He quarries it to build a palace wall.
And so the light of day beams in again
Upon the youths, who wake to grateful prayer
That blessed day has come so soon again,
(For all their sleep seemed but an hour's delight)
And Malchus, cautiously descends the mount,
To buy their bread in pagan Ephesus.
Yet much he fears the tyrant Decius
And the rough buffets of the Roman Guard.
When, lo! descending to the city's gate,
He sees a golden cross thereon upreared;
And passing through the portals in a daze,
He wanders on in wonder through the ways.
Where are the images of all the gods—
The silver semblance of Diana fair?
He sees them not, but everywhere he views
The sacred symbol of the Savior's death,

And hears the name of Christ on every tongue.
At last he enters in where bread is sold,
And gives in payment there a silver coin.
"It is an ancient coin," the baker said,
"And bears the image of old Decius."
"Nay you but jest," said Malchus, "where is he?"
"Dead these two hundred years," the man replied,
And, deeming that the youth had lost his mind,
He sent him to the Bishop of the town.
The Bishop heard the marvelous story through,
And being deeply learned in history,
Recalled the memory of the noble seven
And their sad fate in days of Decius.
Then coming to the rocky mountain cave,
(Led up by Malchus all the winding way,)
He witnessed all the truth of what was told.
Nor lacked he faith in God, for he believed
All wondrous things with Him were possible.
But ere by letter he could tell the tale
Unto the Christian Emperor, the youths

Sank into blessed dreams again, and waked
Within a crystal city where was peace.

I think we all are dreamers like the seven ;
The morning rises from her silver throne
And smiles upon the hours we call our own.
The minutes brim like drops of golden wine
O'er Life's o'erflowing cup ; we see the shine
Of perfect day on every path we scan ;
And Fame's fair vaulted Temple on the span
Of rainbow arches is upheld — and gleams
In every future of our boyhood dreams.
But while we follow every promise sweet,
With buoyant hearts and lightly springing feet,
To where some joy untasted yet awaits,—
We hear the solemn sound of closing gates ;
And driven by Care, we leave the City bright,
To mount with aching feet some rocky height
Where Time dispels the hopes that Fancy gave,

And all life's prospect narrows to a cave.
Less sweet we sleep than did the sleepers seven,
Our dreams are shadows — theirs were bright with
 Heaven.

Haply to every soul there comes an hour
When Sorrow's hand smites in the wall with power,
Or Love hath breathed a whisper soft and low,
And wrought the miracle of Jericho.

And thus we come again or soon or late,
To pass once more the mystic City's gate.
Our hearts grow tender as we view again
The dear remembered vistas of the plain,
And as we draw the sun-lit portals near,
The air is sweet to us with vesper prayer;
While o'er the gate our lifted eyes behold
The sacred sign — a cross of shining gold.



A LEGEND OF ST. JOHN.

INSCRIBED TO

C. C. BONNEY.





A LEGEND OF ST. JOHN.

THEN Jesus answered unto Peter, "If I will
That he shall tarry till I come again,
What is it unto thee?" He spake of John.

In Russia there still lives a legend sweet,
Repeated by the grandsire to the child,—
A dear old legend, which has lived so long,
And held an honored place so many years
By ancient firesides long since turned to dust—
A legend which doth mind us so of eve,
Of lengthened shadows, wonder-opened eyes,
And groups which listened ere they went their way,
We well might wish the story may be true,—
Of him who once had lain on Jesus' breast.
This is the tale, as I remember it.

When John to Patmos' isle was banishèd,
He saw and heard unutterable things,
The "Revelation" is a shadow poor,
Of his most marvelous experience.
But human language never can convey,
And human intellect can never span,
Things not of earth. When from his beauteous dream
Unwillingly the loved disciple woke,
His heart was burning with new zeal for God
And therefore with more tender love for man.
Down the steep mountain side, with ready feet,
To preach the gospel to the Greeks, he ran,
To tell of that fair city with its gates
Of gleaming pearl, and streets of shining gold,
Built for the people of the gracious Lord.
But to the Greeks his words were foolishness.
The Stoics cried, "What doth this babbler say?
He seems a setter forth of unknown gods!"
And thus they closed their ears against his words
Of beauty, and went on their careless way.

'Twere long to tell how patiently he toiled;
How some believed, and some refused to hear;
Of all the cities that he visited;
And how his words were always, "God is love;"
How he was saved by miracle from death,
When cast into a pot of boiling oil;
How in a weary dungeon he was thrown,
Yet counted it but gain, for in the dark
The angels dwelt with him and made it light.
At last he was released. Perhaps his face —
So full of holy love, so angel-sweet,
He seemed Christ's brother — moved his cruel foes
To pity; and they bade him go in peace.
So from the rusty iron gates he passed,
With a bowed form, and hair as white as snow.

John traversed Europe for the Lord. At last
His pilgrim feet pressed Russia. Through its coast
He preached with holy fervor, as was meet,
The message of the Lord to erring men.

But everywhere with cold indifference,
Or anger, or contempt, his words were met :
Until, at last, with bleeding feet, he came
To bleak Siberia. A churlish crowd
Received his message with a stupid stare ;
Which, as he gently told them of their need
Of Him who came to save them from their sins,
Changed to a glare of rage. So curst were they,
They would have slain him ; but on his calm face
There fell a light supernal, and he passed
In safety through their midst, and came at last
To where the Arctic laves with icy wave
The chill Siberian coast, and there a boat
Filled with strong men received him, and they plied
Their oars, and like a swift-winged bird, sped north.

Within the iceberg barricade which girds
Impregnably the Northern Pole, 'tis said
There is a Beulah Land surpassing fair,
With beaming sky and soft delicious air,

Rich with the perfume sweet of blossoms rare.
Its trees have never turned to russet tinge ;
The girdling waves, warm as the summer, fringe
Its golden sands with lace of foam, and die
In soft accord with bird-song melody.
No cruel heats nor chilling blasts invade,
But the sweet quietude of twilight shade
Brings ever to the mind a holy calm.
And there, 'tis said, the Great Apostle waits
Until the end of all things shall draw near,
When he will come again, and preach to men
With the old words of love, and move their hearts
To penitence, and they will captive yield
To the sweet words of truth, and give their lives
With heartiness to deeds of charity.

Come, blest Apostle! from the icy North
Haste thy departure, for the world is faint
And weary for the music of thy feet.
The earth is growing old. Two thousand years

Have fled since thou and Jesus walked with men.
Two thousand years of bitterness of creeds;
Two thousand years of selfishness and crime.

Come thou! our clouded hearts to gently win
From chilling unbelief, from fear and sin.
Come, as to evening comes the silver moon;
As comes the south-wind on the wings of June:
From the far south the waves of summer roll,
Come from the North, thou summer of the soul!
O, how our eyes are lifted to behold
The rising of the star whose beams of gold
Will usher in, with Bethlehem songs above,
The day of Love — sweet universal Love.
Thou art its priest, O son of Zebedee,
And we are waiting — waiting still for thee.
Why tarry yet thy footsteps from afar
Thou gentler John the Baptist? May thy star
The herald of *The Christ* uprising shine,
The harbinger of love — of Love Divine.

THE BLESSED VALE.

INSCRIBED TO

H. N. POWERS.





THE BLESSED VALE.

PRELUDE.

WHY should we journey to a distant star?
For lo! we dwell within the Land of Dream;
The walls of jasper round about us gleam,
Beneath our feet the golden pavements are.

It is not far, O brothers, to the light;
Unheard by us the crystal waters flow,—
By every path the leaves of healing grow;
We dream of pinions when we need but SIGHT.

There is a Blessed Vale of beauty rare,
Alas! I cannot find it when I would;

Yet sometimes, in a meditative mood,
My feet have wandered, how I know not, there.

On devious paths unseen by mortal eyes,
O'er pleasant fields or shadowy by-ways drear,
I draw in joy, perchance in sadness, near
To where in peace the Blessed Valley lies.

Sometimes when thro' the sapphire arch of morn
The tides of light and bird-song mingled roll,
A softer radiance falls upon my soul,
A sweeter music to mine ear is borne.

When day's last color like a star-tipt sail
Has vanished o'er the western sea of night,
The air grows mellow with a rosy light,—
And lo! I stand within the mystic vale.

And sometimes on the city's crowded street,
Where avarice meets in never-ending fray,

The roar of trafficking dies far away,
And round me blooms the Blessed Valley sweet.

Bright dreams of Heaven! alas, how soon ye fail,
And leave me to the empty ways of earth,
Whose treasures seem to me of little worth,
Since I have stood within the Blessed Vale.





